United Nations E/2005/NGO/4

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
24 May 2005
English
Original: French

Substantive session of 2005
New York, 29 June-27 July 2005
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities

Statement submitted by Association tunisienne des droits de l'enfant, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2005/100.

05-35912 (E) 100605 150605

Tunis statement

We, the participants in the International Seminar on Children's Rights and the Information Society and in the Youth Forum organized by the network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on children's rights at the instance of the Tunisian Association for the Rights of the Child (ATUDE) and with the support of the NGO Section of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Family, Children and the Elderly and the Ministry of Information Technologies, on 14 and 15 January 2005 in Tunis

Recalling the Declaration of Principles issued after the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva in December 2003, the second phase of which will be held in November 2005 in Tunis, express the hope that the information society will be an inclusive society in which every child will have the opportunity to create, access, use and share information

Reaffirming the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular, the right of any person, and therefore, of any child, as set forth in:

- Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on "freedom of opinion and expression";
- Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which assures children of their right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and that their views will be given due weight. This principle, which stresses the role of children as active participants in the protection and defence of their rights, also applies to all measures adopted by the State to implement the Convention;
- Article 13 of the Convention stipulating the right of children to freedom of opinion and expression, which also includes the right of access to information;
- Article 17 of the Convention, which enjoins States Parties to encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of children from information and material injurious to their well-being; and
- Article 28 of the Convention, which recognizes universal primary education as essential to building a genuinely inclusive information society which also meets the goals of educating children with a view to promoting the development of their personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential in accordance with article 29.1 of the Convention.

Submit the following recommendations which are based on the discussions held during the Seminar and Youth Forum and which will be incorporated in a plan of action in April 2005. The Tunis Declaration and the Plan of Action will be submitted to the High-level Segment of the substantive session of ECOSOC in New York, in July 2005 for subsequent incorporation into the working documents of the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Tunis in 2005.

1. Policy commitment

States which have ratified the Convention should work to implement it and take all the legislative, administrative and other measures necessary to enforce the

rights set forth in the Convention, especially those concerning the right of children to information and to communication with a view to preparing for their integration into the new information society.

2. Access to new information technologies

Within the context of national cyber-strategies, Governments, civil society and the private sector must work together with a view to:

- Meeting the specific needs of children through educational, administrative and legislative measures that will ensure their full integration into the information society by encouraging the design and production of new technologies for information and communication (NTIC) equipment and services that are easily accessible and financially affordable;
- Providing children with access to quality and child-friendly information. Every child should have the possibility of creating, accessing, using and sharing information and knowledge; and
- Promoting the development of technologies, applications and content tailored to children and young people. Governments, civil society and the private sector should work to put in place systems that can create, handle and network effectively and efficiently, at all levels, information and knowledge specific to children and young people.

3. Poverty alleviation and unequal access to NTICs

Considering the unequal Internet access resulting from the North/South divide, we recommend that:

- Financial resources, emanating from social and digital solidarity, should be channelled for the use of children and young people, particularly those in the developing countries in order to guarantee equal chances of Internet access for all the children of the world;
- Vigorous action should be taken and pursued to protect children and young people working in the ICT sectors;
- A media fund should be set up within the context of a partnership between donors and civil society to finance and support children's and youth initiatives in the sectors of the media, information and communication.

4. Right of children to media-related education

Considering that education, knowledge, information and communication constitute the source of development and well-being of children, we recommend that Governments, civil society and the private sector, should work together to:

- Link up primary, secondary and higher educational institutions to information and communications technologies and intensify the use of information and communication technologies at all levels of children's education;
- Link up national libraries and cultural centres to information and communication technologies;

- Make specific changes in primary and secondary educational handbooks with a view to meeting the challenges of the information society while taking into account specific national realities;
- Deal with the contradictions and challenges resulting from the globalization of education and the digital divide;
- Build developing country capacities in the areas of education, technological know-how and information access.

5. Right of children to protection from information and materials harmful to their well-being

Convinced that children, by their nature and as major users of ICTs, need special protection in which the efforts of Governments, civil society, family and school and also the basic principles of the Convention, material and pedagogical resources, legal and regulatory guarantees are combined and are mutually complementary, we recommend that care should be taken to:

- Protect children from harmful uses of NTICs such as illicit and other activities motivated by racial discrimination, xenophobia and more general intolerance, hatred, violence as well as all forms of ill-treatment of children, including paedophilia and child pornography;
- Protect and preserve the diversity of cultures and avoid cultural stereotyping. Gender discrimination, which generally affects women and girls, is a major issue in terms of protection; and
- Ensure that research on universal communications identifiers (UCI) whereby e-mail addresses, mobile telephone numbers and all other identifiers would be replaced and remain unchanged for life, irrespective of technological advances which may come along, should be — where necessary — applied very cautiously in the interests of children and young people, making sure that they are protected against harmful information.

6. Role of the media in protecting and promoting the rights of children

Considering that the media play an essential role in propagating the Convention and knowledge and understanding thereof, we recommend that Governments, in partnership with all other players including non-governmental organizations, should:

- Prepare national strategies for ITC use by children;
- Reform their regulatory framework;
- Encourage the creation of watchdog organizations;
- Formulate programmes and projects for improving connectivity, capacity-building and the preparation of local content; and
- Work to promote regional and international exchanges.